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H O R R O R S IN ARCHITECTURE AND SO-CALLED WORKS OF ART IN BRONZE IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BY AN ADMIRER
OF ART WHOSE
NAME IS OF
NO CONSEQUENCE TO THE READER



THE WEALTHY CITIZENS OF ROME WHO VISITED ATHENS IN THE HEIGHT OF ITS REFINEMENT AND ARTISTIC SPLENDOR, CARRIED BACK WITH THEM TO THE IMPERIAL CITY OF THE CÆSARS WONDERFUL ACCOUNTS OF THE GREAT WORKS OF ART WHICH ADORNED THE CITY OF PERICLES. TO THE INFLUENCE OF THESE VISITS MAY BE TRACED THE ADVENT AMONG THE ROMANS AT A LATER PERIOD OF THOSE ATHENIAN MASTERS WHICH GAVE CHARACTER TO THE MOST RENOWNED ERA OF GREEK CIVILIZATION, AND WHOSE WORKS AND TEACHINGS LED TO A REVOLUTION IN THE ROMAN ART OF THAT DAY, CULMINATING IN A BRIEF PERIOD IN THE STUDENTS OF ROME RIVALLING THEIR MASTERS OF GREECE.

WHAT A GLORIOUS OPPORTUNITY IS AFFORDED OUR OWN PEOPLE TO REPRODUCE UPON THIS CONTINENT A HISTORICAL PARALLEL.

THE WEALTHY CITIZEN OF NEW YORK IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WENT TO GREECE, ROME, VENICE AND PARIS. WHAT DID HE BRING BACK?

NEW YORK
M DCCC LXXXVI



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ARCHITECTURAL HORRORS

THE proneness of New Yorkers when traveling abroad to indulge in somewhat exaggerated descriptions of their metropolis is proverbial. In London, Paris, Rome, Nice, and other resorts in Europe, an attentive listener may often hear our prosperous and self-satisfied men of business tell wondering Englishmen, Frenchmen and others, that New York is the finest city in the world, and that Americans generally, and New Yorkers in particular, are the most intelligent, cultured, luxurious and progressive people on the face of the earth. Some go so far as to intimate that there is very little worth seeing or possessing outside the boundaries of their favored Manhattan Isle. Possibly a few may admit that Paris is all very well, "but," they are careful to add, "wait until you see New York."

When we characterize a city as fine or beautiful, we must take into consideration all of its leading and general features, such as streets, parks, docks, public and private buildings, museums, picture galleries and out-door statuary. All of these, artistically conceived, executed and harmoniously combined, go very far toward making a beautiful city. Geographical boundaries or a large population do not always constitute a fine city. But in an American sense they

usually do. And with most Americans all that is beautiful in art and architecture fade before the utilitarian triumphs of trade and the all-absorbing mania for moneymaking.

New York is, and probably will be for a century to come, supremely crude and ostentatious in its art adornments and architecture, thanks to the commercial instincts of its trading population. Its architecture, which ought to be its best and grandest feature, is simply barbarous. Hardly a dozen buildings in the whole city are free from the defects and deformities born of that most predominant of American peculiarities—the instinct of procuring as much as possible of loud and vulgar show for the money expended. It is this instinct of the trader that has introduced the hideous iron fronts into his house of business, which architecturally disfigure many of our most prominent thoroughfares. It follows him in the erection of his home; transforms wood into the semblance of stone and paints a lie upon his sanded wood and zinc cornice. This instinct is the parent of nearly all of our violations of the rules of good art. There is scarcely an existing offence against good taste in architecture in this city which cannot be traced to this source. Show the average business man of New York how he can save, in the erection of his home or his warehouse, a few hundred dollars and he will not hesitate to disfigure his own building and destroy the harmony of a whole block. If New York had had no good examples to follow, these crudities and horrors would still reflect upon the native taste and inventive faculties of our countrymen.

Let us glance for a moment at some of the principal cities of Europe to see if we cannot establish some sort of a standard in fine and beautiful cities. London may be truthfully regarded as a great and fine city. It is well and honestly governed; its streets are well paved; it abounds in fine parks; its sanitary condition is excellent; it has many public and private buildings rich in architectural adornments, and its statues and art monuments generally are worthy of respectful consideration. While Paris is as beautiful and fanciful as a dream, London is a staid and solid reality.

Paris is not only a great city, but it is at first sight bewilderingly beautiful. No part of our earth is more adorned. It may be denominated the fairest jewel among the cities of the world, and in the number and beauty of its public buildings and monuments it is without a rival. The view that fascinates the eye in every direction from the Place de la Concorde is matchless among the works of man. This spectacle in itself would amply recompense one for the discomforts of an ocean voyage. Good taste and art culture are everywhere manifested, and a happy combination of the useful and beautiful pervades the whole. Several of the later examples of Parisian architecture are splendid illustrations of artistic instinct and study, and are conclusive proofs of the refinement of French taste. Where can a nobler or more stately group of buildings be found than that which includes the Louvre, Pavillon de Flore, and many of the public offices? Where can a grander or more artistic monument be found than the Arc de Triomphe? at once a triumph of symmetry and sculptural adornment and the epitome of all that is heroic in the history of France; a work worthy of the mind that conceived it, and of the reverent regard of a great nation! The existence of one such monument ought to be satisfactory evidence of the art culture of the nation which produced it. What other city has such a temple dedicated to the lyric drama? It is without doubt the most original, complete and charming architectural production of later times. The best principles of ancient and modern art would seem to have been exhausted in its outline and detail. The auditorium is indeed disappointing. The setting is worthy of a better jewel. While admiring its noble outlines and artistic adornments, we may be forgiven by critics if we forget some faults of interior construction. St. Peter's, at Rome, strikes the beholder with astonishment upon first sight, but seems to decrease in size upon nearer approach; while the Opera House, at Paris, unfolds new beauties at every step of approach, without losing in magnitude. It is a feast of which the eye never wearies and is emphatically one of those views to which distance does not lend enchantment. The Hotel des Invalides, the Palais du Corps

Legislatif, the Pantheon, the Madeleine, Trocadero, and many other buildings are fine examples of the noble and the refined in art.

Berlin and Vienna are also beautiful cities. Though not to be compared with Paris, they are much finer in their general features than any American city. They contain many public and private buildings which bear evidence of the good taste and culture of their citizens, and are very attractive to strangers. The Ring strasse of the latter contains several as fine edifices as are to be found in any city of the world.

In comparison what are the attractions of New York? An intelligent stranger possessed of a reasonable amount of art culture, landing at the Battery from a foreign country, would shudder to behold that wonderful creation of New York's inventive genius and *benevolence* known as the elevated railroad structure.

The next object to attract his attention would be that pandora box of electricity born of the Western Union Telegraph monopoly. This would be his first introduction to an ultra example of the new order of American architecture. Beholding its superabundance of unmeaning, unsightly, unnecessary and inartistic iron ornamentation and its apparent top-heaviness, the instinct of self-preservation would hasten his footsteps to the opposite side of the street. From the fifth story upward this structure presents a most remarkable illustration of the new order, which might be appropriately designated the Hotch Potch, in contradistinction to the composite.

The next architectural curiosity to claim his attention would be the new Post Office building, with its multiform and multitudinous roofs, and its banded sections of ugly, useless columns, which Henry Ward Beecher remarked "looked as though they were troubled with a continuous attack of influenza."

Following along the natural course he would next encounter that barbaric pile erected to commemorate the founding of the New York *Tribune* by Horace Greeley in 1841, a malignant and grotesque caricature of several of the better features of the Palazzo

Vecchia at Florence, and another startling example of the new American order.

The new Court House would next confront him; he would wonder from what book of drawings its parts were stolen, and marvel at the ingenuity of the builder that jumbled them together in such a hideous whole.

Continuing up Broadway—"the finest street in the world"—he would have abundant opportunity for observing the endless variety of our commercial structures. While he would lament over the existence of the many Cheap-John iron fronts, he would doubtless rejoice that a profusion of paint partly conceals them, and he would thank the painter for covering the work of the puddler.

After being dazed with an altogether unique display of acres of sign-boards of every conceivable form, color and finish (most of which would disgrace the shop of a quack doctor or a chiropodist), and after picking his way through a forest of picturesque and interesting telegraph poles over the worst pavement in the world, he would reach Fifth Avenue—another member of that numerous American family of "the finest in the world." Of course he would pause on his way to contemplate that singular pile of vermiculated and otherwise ornamented marble, cast iron and glass, erected to perpetuate the memory of a great success in dry goods.

A few blocks more and he will reach a new club house. This is the latest, as well as the most nerve-exciting achievement in the way of metropolitan house-building. Its existence is a blessing, and its destruction would be a calamity to the architects of New York. It has been asserted that of the numerous plans submitted by city architects to the club authorities, none were found sufficiently meretricious or *outré* to meet their approval, and a neighboring city "at great expense" furnished the brain that conceived this pretentious monstrosity. This is, beyond all question, the most extreme illustration of the new order. There is no line, angle, or curve known to geometry that cannot be found jumbled together without aim or object in many parts of the exterior of this building. Its success in the way of out-of-place, clumsy, un-

couth and queer projections, great columns supporting nothing and unsightly forms which mean nothing, and a general want of harmony and intelligent design is, in itself, a remarkable triumph of architectural ingenuity. A writer who has evidently gained the upper sunflower level in the realm of æsthetic literature says: "This building is the opposite of repose, and has the merit of its defects." This very intelligible and lucid description clearly and satisfactorily defines the subject. There is, however, one objection to this building which outweighs all of those relating to violations of art and good taste; it is the absence from it of that home air which is essential in such a structure. The average club man considers his club a part of his domicile, consequently in all of its prominent features it should suggest as much as possible of home. And if it fails to accomplish this result, it falls far short of what it ought to be. It follows, therefore, that the exterior and interior should be homelike and quiet. In this instance there is not the slightest exterior indication of interior use. It might as well have been built for a court house or a produce exchange. The whole is simply an incongruous, inharmonious, ostentatious pile thrown together without any design predicated upon appreciative professional intelligence.

If our stranger were to continue his walk northward, we might next find him looking at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, that cross between a cotton press and a pork-packing establishment, with an interior of a railway station. Here he would pause, wonder and reflect, and would naturally suggest, since this building was erected to contain works of art, that it ought to present an artistic appearance to the beholder. If questioned on this point, the self-satisfied citizen would probably answer, "that Americans were a practical sort of people, who neither want nor care for hifalutin art flummery." In this temple dedicated to art our stranger would look in vain for any external forms of beauty or ornamentation indicative of its character or purposes, and he would involuntarily exclaim, "if this building is an example of American sense of propriety, the art culture of this people must indeed be crude."

The Natural Science Depository west of the park, in its near resemblance to a reasonably fair specimen of a Manchester cotton factory, would again suggest to the mind of our stranger the practical character of our people, and he could easily imagine that an academy had set up business in a second-hand manufactory.

Standing out as a bright oasis in this dreary desert of the incongruous and commonplace is the Lenox Library, which is one of the two or three public buildings in the city of New York which does not offend good taste. It is solid, plain, appropriate, and is not overburdened with inartistic, tawdry ornamentation. The natural good sense and ripe culture of its generous founder is evidenced in its construction, and it is a monument worthy to perpetuate the memory of a noble and intelligent citizen. The observations made during this walk would lead the astonished stranger to the adoption of two conclusions :

First,—That he had landed upon the shores of a country inhabited by half-civilized barbarians, many of whom had apparently been caught out in an indefinite number of showers of greenbacks with their aprons spread in front of them.

Second,—That the world's best efforts of art and architecture were unknown to this people.

Of the New York "stores," shops, warehouses and dwellings nothing better can be said than of its public edifices. As a rule, the fronts are overloaded with useless, rude, inartistic and unmeaning projections for which there is no appropriate space or place, and the whole crowned by an ostentatious and often fantastic cornice of wood or zinc, painted and sanded to imitate the stone-work, usually out of proportion with the structure it is intended to ornament. Of course there are exceptions to this commonplace rule; they are, however, so insignificant in numbers that they do but little toward elevating the general character of our city architecture.

It is possible that many of these architectural deformities may be attributed to characteristic vanity and conceit. Instead of profiting by what has been done in the past, our architects and men of wealth have started out upon new paths of their own. Of course it

goes without saying that their achievements are designed to surpass anything heretofore attempted in architecture.

A resident of New York, of supposed culture and of the highest social position (he has the reputation of being worth several millions), who has several times traveled over the greater part of Europe, has said that he considered the buildings above referred to as fine as anything he had ever seen abroad. If American education and foreign travel lead to such results, we surely have urgent need to reform our methods of education, and that we should promptly erect a Chinese wall high enough to insure the keeping of our peculiar intelligence to ourselves.

OUR BRONZE HORRORS

When the writer undertook *con amore* to write a few pages of what he considered to be well-merited criticism on some American peculiarities made painfully conspicuous in the out-door statuary of New York, it was not his intention to invade the realm of architecture, or to speak of general city features. His real objectives were the examples of so-called statuesque art which infest the public places of the metropolis, and which he has grouped under the head of "Our Bronze Horrors."

Within the boundaries of New York City there are now exposed to public view and intended to be commemorative and ornamental the following alleged works of art, viz.:

1. Statue of Franklin, Printing House Square.
2. " " Staats Zeitung Building.
3. " Guttenberg, " "
4. " Washington, Treasury Building, Wall street.
5. " " (equestrian), Union Square.
6. " " (copy Houdon), Riverside Park.
7. " Lafayette, Union Square.
8. " Lincoln, " "
9. " Seward, Madison Square.
10. " Farragut, " "
11. " Shakespeare, Central Park.
12. " Burns, " "
13. " Scott, " "
14. " Halleck, " "
15. " Morse, " "
16. " Webster, " "
17. " Hamilton, " "
18. " Seventh Regiment, "

19. Statue of Commerce, Central Park.
20. " Indian Hunter, "
21. " The Pilgrim, "
22. " Falconer, "
23. " Bolivar (equestrian), Central Park.
24. " William E. Dodge, Broadway and Sixth avenue.
25. Bust of Humboldt, Central Park.
26. " Moore, "
27. " Mazzini, "
28. " Schiller, "
29. " Beethoven, "
30. Groups of Eagles and Lambs, Central Park.
31. " Lioness Feeding her Young, Central Park.
32. " The large Vanderbilt Bronze in relief, Hudson street.
33. " Charity, Equitable Life Insurance Building, Broadway.

Of these, two or three are good, the others either commonplace or indifferent or exceedingly faulty. Prominent among the latter class is the one intended to represent our late President Lincoln, in Union Square. It would seem incredible that the hand that modeled the equestrian statue of Washington erected on the opposite side of the Square was the same that fashioned this uncouth caricature of our beloved Lincoln. The statue of Washington is most creditable, and, if not a great work of art, is, on the other hand, neither commonplace or offensive. The other is inartistic in design and defective in general treatment. The face is something of a likeness, and is the best part of a statue in no respect creditable to art. The general outline of the figure is awkward, unnatural, angular and stiff, while the little details of modeling and manipulation are worthy of a maker of figureheads for canal boats, and Comanche warriors for the fronts of snuff shops. President Lincoln was not an Apollo Belvidere in form, nor Byronic in his style of beauty, but he possessed that which was better than either, a most interesting and sympathetic face. No one ever saw him while he was President without being impressed with his unaffected simplicity of character and great kindness of heart. His natural expression was of extreme kindness always tinged with sadness. This statue expresses none of these characteristics, which have contributed so

much toward the making of his fame—which is the revered common property of every loyal household. If, as a work of art, it could be pronounced good, even then it would be a failure, as it does not in any single essential particular represent the man. Worse than the statue, if possible; more deplorable in design, is that indescribable affair around the base of its pedestal, popularly denominated the “What Is It?”

There can be no possible excuse for surrounding the base of the statue with the hideous circle of meaningless masonry bearing the inscription. The appropriate place for an inscription is upon the sides of a pedestal, and not upon a section of a stone wall around its base. This effort of genius must have emanated from the art department of the Park Commission. Only a choice lot of politically-appointed commissioners could have achieved such a result.

As we approach this statue from the front we see only the words “with malice,” which would naturally indicate to a stranger that malice was the prominent trait in Mr. Lincoln’s character. The want of knowledge which was the cause of this violation of propriety is wholly unpardonable.

The bronze affair in Madison Square intended to perpetuate the memory of Mr. Seward is the production of an exceedingly energetic and pushing man of business. If he had taken to Wall street, stocks, railroads or patent medicines, instead of clay, marble and bronze, he would have achieved enduring fame, and the world would have recorded another “Wall Street Magnate,” “Railroad King” or “Merchant Prince.” An individual of an inquiring turn of mind would naturally ask, How is it that a person who has manufactured so many statues, groups and heroic monuments should have made them all so far beneath critical contempt? This supposed sculptor has succeeded in planting his grotesque effigies in many places upon the face of this fair continent, and in vain we search among them all for an example which could stand the test of intelligent criticism. In the soldiers’ plot in the cemetery at Cincinnati there is a statue, by this manufacturer, of a soldier, which might appropriately be called the Flying Dutchman, and at Providence,

R. I., there is a monument, also by him, with five figures, erected to perpetuate the fame of Rhode Island's sons killed in battle, and the workmanship is worthy of his business qualifications and of the inspection of those who are curious in the matter of heroic monuments. The citizens of Providence may congratulate themselves on possessing an entirely unique production of the ultra-American type.

While contemplating this statue of Seward we see only the workshop of the founder. One could never realize that the model from which it was cast had ever known the cunning hand of a sculptor. It is as commonplace as possible, and the design might have been taken from a State bank-note of twenty-five years ago. There is not the slightest evidence of its having been modeled from a human form. Poor Seward, saved from the dagger of the assassin, little dreamed of the fate his deluded but well-meaning friends had in store for him. Alas! something worse than death, which is only momentary. Bronze will endure the ravages of time and the elements for centuries.

Professor Morse was an artist before he became an inventor. His portraits are regarded as meritorious works of art and interesting as counterfeit presentments of his sitters. Decent respect for his memory as an artist ought to have insured better treatment at the hands of his friends. If necessary to perpetuate him in bronze, the task ought to have been accomplished with some degree of artistic skill. This statue which his friends have purchased is a worthy member of the Lincoln-Seward family. It cannot be very much worse than either, and certainly is not much better. The sculptor who exercised his invention upon this production was evidently aware of his incapacity, and did not attempt anything in the way of fantastic position, elaborate modeling or delicate detail. He was undoubtedly wise in contenting himself with erecting upon a pedestal a vertical column of bronze metal, void of form or expression. The one thing satisfactory about the affair is this: the park authorities have been considerate in placing it away from either of the principal thoroughfares.

One of our two most extraordinary productions is that composite casting erected to perpetuate the memory of the author of "Marco Bozzaris." Until the Scotch statue of Burns was erected, this stood alone in the might of its hideousness. It is not possible that there can be anything like it above, upon or under the earth. And it is quite impossible for a person of fair understanding to conjecture the why and wherefore of its discouraging existence. Were the friends of the dead poet blind, or were they only intent upon carrying out the commercial idea of getting the most for their money? If the intent of the manufacturer was to represent a real human figure, why did he furnish the promoters of the statue scheme with a lay figure in bronze, and a very grotesque one at that? And wherefore did he appropriate, elaborate, and magnify the chair of the inventor of the Seward? It was also unkind to steal the legs of Seward and give them to Halleck. This "figgur" maker has been too generous. A single city ought not to possess more than one such chair. These elaborate examples of the foundrymen's art ought to be equitably distributed. Every city of over five hundred thousand inhabitants should possess one such bronze chair and its accompanying emblems for the purpose of warning stone cutters, iron moulders, and confectionery modelers what to avoid. This casting is worse than the puzzle of fifteen. The more it is studied the less there is known about it. It is quite impossible to arrive at any sort of a satisfactory conclusion as to what it is about. It is doubtful if any person, however skilled or learned in statuary, could decide if the maker intended it for a memorial of a man or an advertisement of the latest thing in the way of a cast-iron architectural chair, invented by some enterprising furniture dealer. Could the writer of the Stones of Venice decide as to whether the statue was made for the chair or the chair for the statue? A satisfactory solution of this interesting problem must be left to some future disciple of high art. The presence of a part of a regalia in the form of a collar in use for cart horses forces another puzzling suggestion upon the mind of the beholder. Seemingly there can be but one explanation of the presence of this em-

blem. The poet must have belonged to the Hibernians or the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, and, when he posed for this "figgur" had just come in from a parade in honor of Ireland's Patron Saint. This conclusion, if not correct, is somewhat satisfactory, since it accounts for the presence of one part of the casting. There are also other evidences which bear out this conclusion. The poet has thrown his blanket (no doubt green) upon one corner of his chair. and hung his wreath of laurel or shamrock upon the other. It is a well-established historical fact that the seventeenth of March cannot be relied upon, so far as wet and wind are concerned; hence the presence of a back cover, and the wreath for the protection of the head. The beholder of this work will also perceive that the poet has provided himself with note-book and pencil. In all well-regulated attempts at sculpture and portrait painting these symbols are used to denote literary propensities. The average reporter of one of "The great Metropolitan Dailies" is supposed to have numberless pockets filled with these useful commodities. In the days of the poet in question, that useful being, the omnipresent, unflagging, indefatigable, and never-ending individual known as the reporter did not flourish as now, and great literary lights were not above writing an account of an important event for a newspaper. Now, query: Was not this poet at the time he was set up in clay engaged in writing a spirited report of the "Patrick's Day Procession?" It is impossible to think or write seriously of this singular caricature, and the reasons for its existence must ever remain a mystery. How a set of men could have been brought together, professing to have been friends and admirers of a notable poet, and could have accepted a model for such an affair as this is a wonder; and after its completion in bronze it is incomprehensible that a Park Commission could be found possessing the requisite want of culture and sufficiency of bad taste to accept it for the city and permit its erection.

Several inconsiderate countrymen of the immortal Robert Burns, residing in the city of New York, are far in advance of the friends of Halleck. They have presented, and the Park Commissioners

have accepted, a very extraordinary bronze casting which is worse than the Halleck, and which it is alleged represents the physical form of one of the world's most loved and charming poets. But they had to go outside the borders of American territory in order to achieve complete success in this unparalleled undertaking. No American citizen, native or naturalized, could be found so entirely lost to all sense of present shame or hope of future salvation as to permit of his designing or constructing a thing so supremely hideous.

These gentlemen no doubt sent out specifications and blank contracts to all the foundrymen and stone cutters in this country with requests to return plans in illustration of specifications, and at the same time to furnish bonds for the faithful performance of contract. When all the bids had been returned, and the bonds examined and approved, the drawings of the various would-be contractors were then, no doubt, submitted to a select committee appointed for their especial fitness as experts in statuary; and after many solemn conferences rejected, for the reason that none of them were sufficiently grotesque or worse than the Halleck. A decision was then made to cross the ocean in search of novelty, and a few months later the unfortunate residents of New York were permitted to behold the result. And such a result!!!

What brain could have conceived, and what hand manipulated the clay which brought forth this monster of hideousness, so devoid of the form of man and of intelligent design? This fiendish worker in clay has fashioned Burns into the most inconceivably silly-looking, expressionless, booby-milksop-bumpkin ever cast in any mould. The intention of the designer of this statue can never be even conjectured. No pen can describe it; it is as far beyond description as it is out of the reach of criticism. It must be seen to be appreciated.

That ponderous mass of metal intended to represent Sir Walter Scott and his dog; the statue in stone of Alexander Hamilton; and that pompous, strutting affair erected to represent Daniel Webster, are sufficiently low down in the scale of art to be let

alone. But the New Yorker of a hundred years hence will be thankful that they are not so hopelessly bad as are some of their companions.

There is another colossal and startling example of the New York art idea, which the curious may find embedded in the upper portion of a wall of a railway freight station in Hudson street. The reason for its existence and art status may be explained in a few words more conspicuous for strength than elegance. It is a tribute which questionably acquired wealth, and bad taste have paid to successful and unprecedented trickery and avarice. The addition of a watering-pot to the principal figure would add to the harmony and significance of the design.

One of the later additions to our bronze family is a statue to commemorate the brave, modest and loved Farragut. This work, with a comical side, which has been erected to perpetuate his memory, is interesting and fairly represents the man, but the pedestal, which is presumably an example of the very highest art of the Grosvenor Gallery School, puzzles all beholders. It is doubtful if any reasonable expenditure of intellectual force could decipher its meaning. To the writer it seems an affectation which interprets exactly nothing.

A considerable number of the world's would-be upper intellectuals are said to be engaged in a search after the beautiful, the true and the good. Some of them, if accounts are to be credited, have discovered all of these combined in a teapot, while others have found refuge from the chills of a cold, unfeeling world beneath the shadow of a sunflower. It is also asserted that many of these worshippers, after having ascertained where true happiness is to be found, are devoting themselves to the attainment of the upper teapot level. At least one of these immortals, we fear, has strayed from his loved occupation, and the result—an æsthetic pedestal.

Among the later additions to our public collection can be found in the Central Park an equestrian statue of Simon Bolivar, one of the South American patriots, a present from his countrymen and a replica of an original erected somewhere in his native land.

We ought to be very thankful for this example of South American casting. For in the fact of its existence we find the consoling proof—most conclusive—that there is another people in the world quite as devoid of art knowledge and taste as ourselves.

The latest addition to our out-of-door statuary is a full-length bronze figure of the late William E. Dodge, by Ward. The world is no doubt puzzled to account for its existence, for in no sense was Mr. Dodge a distinguished citizen of the United States. He was an exact and successful churchman of the strictly orthodox pattern, a merchant whose career had its cloudy as well as sunny days, but he so managed that the (often dense) clouds which beset him had both golden and silver linings. He was at one time a member of Congress, and presumably useful in that capacity and sufficiently attentive to his public duties, but in no way did he distinguish himself by a conspicuous display of talent. That he gave liberally of his ample means is undeniable, and for this liberality—so unusual among the rich men of New York—he deserves great credit. But do these acts of giving, which render him exceptional among his class, or any of his other prominent characteristics, entitle him to a statue in a public place in a great metropolis? If so, why not one to the late Oleander Fatlean, the rich pork-packer, and another to Cannygrab Doubletwist, the late distinguished dry goods merchant? and the claims of Aristides Bullebare, the aristocratic stock broker, the Adonis of the Exchange and hero of one winter's society Germans, ought not to pass unrecognized; while Magnus Fishplate, the "Great Stock-watering Railroad King," should go down to posterity as the central figure of an allegorical historical group of overflowing watering-pots. The Park Commissioners would gladly consent, and the respective families of the several defuncts would eagerly defray the expense. But, seriously, it is both a mistake and misfortune that this statue should have been permitted to occupy a place in a public thoroughfare. It establishes a precedent which is likely to be extensively followed, and may ultimately result in an epidemic of bronze and stone effigies springing up in our public squares commemorative of the virtues of "our most distin-

guished citizens of high social position." And following the natural course of this extraordinary epidemic, we may within a few years confidently expect to see statues added to a price-current list and quoted at so much per pound. The statue may even follow so closely on the heels of the funeral that the bereaved widow shall dry her tears by the burning rays of light reflected from a costly counterfeit presentment in bronze, gotten up regardless of expense, but commercially a bargain.

In 1874, the then members of the Park Commission, no doubt realizing their incapacity to deal with rapidly accumulating art questions which were being brought before them, appointed a special committee, consisting of the President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the President of the National Academy of Design and the President of the College of Architects, to assist in solving these art problems. Unless the writer has been misinformed, this committee was in existence when the application was made to erect the Burns statue in Central Park, and the question of artistic worth was probably submitted to it for its judgment; and if this committee decided that it was worthy of a place in one of our parks, of what value is the opinion of such experts? Why not dissolve this committee and appoint another composed of a shoemaker, a tinker and a 'longshoreman? If the Park Commissioners and the manufacturers of statues are as active and industrious for the next quarter of a century as they have been in the past, our parks will be mistaken for burial places for at least one of the lost arts, and the statues erected by these assassins of art mistaken for appropriate mortuary memorials. There is seemingly one way out of this unfortunate business. An importation of Nihilists accompanied by the friendly dynamite might effect for us a most merciful deliverance from the evil.

One of New York's urgent needs is an intelligent and honest supervision of parks and public places. There has not been in existence for many years a board of commissioners capable of caring for and fostering the important interests which they are called upon to direct and develop. There has probably never

been more than half a dozen persons connected with the official management of the parks, whose taste or knowledge of art matters were of the slightest value. Commissioners are appointed for short periods of time, and are usually selected with special reference to their capacity for corrupt practices in the interest of party bosses, and a faithful distribution of political patronage. It is a matter of the greatest moment that the vicious and incompetent henchmen of these political bosses shall fill the department, and spend their time in committing offences against good taste and depredations upon the city treasury, and in smashing municipal china generally; while it is not of the least importance that the public service should be properly administered. The results of this political management are the ignoring of important interests, mismanagement, and the department transferred to the predominating Irish party machine, which misgoverns all and absorbs all. The successful man of business empties the contents of his pockets into the coffers of the ruling party, and bowing to the yoke which political rascals have fashioned for him,

Bears his burden like an ass,
And bends his willing back for more.

The writer of this brochure does not flatter himself that what he has written will produce any impression upon those who form committees for the propagation of statues, upon Park Commissioners, or upon any other person or persons who may chance to direct in such matters. In the future, as in the past, no individual will be placed upon a statue committee who has either art knowledge or culture; but great care will be taken to see that no member of such a committee will make its social standing questionable by being worth less than one million of dollars in approved securities.

In conclusion, an idea or two, perhaps egotistical, must be set forth, and then this tirade will have come to an end. The writer believes the following propositions are worthy of consideration:

(1.) A statue or group, whether representing a person, persons, allegory, or mythology, ought beyond all question to be a self-evident, easily recognized work of art. This is a first and indispen-

sable requisite; without it no such work has a right to be displayed in a public place.

(2.) A statue or group ought in the most simple, dignified and natural manner to represent the person, persons, object, or thing intended. It should be truthful, and follow nature as closely as possible.

(3.) The object of works of art displayed in public places is at least two-fold—artistic and commemorative. As a work of art it must instruct and please the beholder, and should commemorate only those whose great and good deeds a nation ought to remember. Certainly the career of a private citizen, however commendable, presents no claim to public recognition in the form of a statue erected in a public place.

If a monument or statue fail in any of these essential elements (and there are few of them in this city that do not), it ought not to exist except as private property and on private grounds. The saying that bad art is better than none is a grave error. Bad art vitiates the public taste and lowers the standard of true art. And those persons who, through ignorance or to indulge a vulgar appetite for notoriety, aid in the dissemination of spurious and inartistic monuments deserve the reprobation of every intelligent citizen. Statues are not necessities, they are one of the many extraordinary outgrowths of a luxurious civilization, and for that reason, if for no other, the public should have the best or none.

VALE.
